

Then we had a start to get at the ardentarios. There we got more quick response, because there the condition was something infernal. Not only did they get wages that averaged anywhere from ten to thirty cents a day for ten to fourteen hours work, but the grub that they give them is something awful, and generally the treatment that prevails there is terrible.

This gives you more or less a general characteristic of the country. The construction of roads is done by loans. There is a tremendous scandal in the country because of the amount of money that has to be paid to Wall Street, and the roads are the worst that you can imagine in spite of the terrific amount of money paid for them. The development of the country was very rapid, particularly in relation to its former development. After the war the United Fruit Company, the tobacco plantations, etc., went forward very rapidly and that was also the time when they contracted the biggest loans. Money was coming in in bucketfuls. During this time the conservative regime tried to use the workers against the bourgeoisie and they made labor legislation that was not so bad. Of course they did not live up to it, and whenever the workers became disturbed, they tried to play between the bourgeoisie and the working class in order to win them away from the liberal bourgeoisie. During the prosperity period there was plenty of employment (The Conservative Party is based on the landlords the commercial bourgeoisie and the real estate owners.) Of course among the real estate owners and bourgeoisie there are plenty of liberals, and in the last 15 years these bourgeoisie in the cities have acquired plenty of land. With the opening of the country there was plenty of new land, which these bourgeoisie grabbed off so that now the social composition of these two parties is rather funny and their policy is reflected in this new social composition. It has its effect, of course, in the different policies pursued by these parties, but the conservative party comes traditionally from the landlords and still has its main support in the countryside. They are defeated in almost every city. The Liberals have the majority in every city. The strength of the Catholic Church. During the elections they just march out these ardentarios surrounded by guards, into the towns. They don't know how to read or write, and they just give them a little slip of paper and on the paper there is written the name of the candidates. This is given to the peasant who goes in and puts it in. Very often he does not know who he is voting for. Last election we played a little trick on them. We did not want that they should recognize the voters there by the color of the slip, so we made the color of the slip the same as the Liberals, and you would have to look at the names in order to know for whom the fellow was voting. Of course this was in agreement with the ardentarios that were with us. But in some regions they wanted outstandingly Communist color. They said they didn't give a damn what the landlords thing.

The prosperity hit the country during the postwar regime of the Conservatives and everybody having plenty of employment there was a tendency of raising wages and even a big strike movement developed because there was plenty of production, shortage of labor, etc. It was during this time that they had some of the biggest strikes. However, the Party that we had at that time was pretty sure that this situation was ripe for revolution. Because the ardentarios, and semi-proletarians, they also wanted more wages, but it was due to the fact that the workers felt that the bosses could not get along without their labor, and so a big strike movement developed. It was mismanaged because the Party did not know anything about strike tactics. They tried to make out of the situation a revolution, but the workers did not want revolution. The Conservatives remained in power during the whole prosperity period. There were various putsches engineered and supported by the bourgeoisie which, however, were crushed by the Conservatives. The Conservatives sustained themselves until the crisis began to hit the country. The crisis began to